

Message Text

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22/12

ACTION AF-04

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FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6401

INFO AMEMBASSY BUJUMBURA

AMEMBASSY KIGALI

AMEMBASSY BANGUI

AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY LOURENCO MARQUES

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMCONSUL CAPETOWN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

USMISSION USUN NY

C O N F I D E N T I A L KINSHASA 1125

LIMDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (ADD EO TAGS AND SUBJ LINES)

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: AO, CG, UR, CU, PINS, PFOR

SUBJECT: MOBUTU TRIMS SAIL

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EF: A) KINSHASA 0516
B) KINSHASA 0781 (NOTAL)
C) KINSHASA 0973
D) KINSHASA 0877
E) MONROVIA 0784 (NOTAL)

1. GIVEN THE DIM PROSPECTS OF THE FNLA ON THE NORTHERN FRONT, THE DISAPPOINTING PERFORMANCE OF ZAIRIAN TROOPS IN ANGOLA, NEGATIVE VOTES IN THE US CONGRESS, THE EROSION OF THE FRIENDLY 22, A DEEPING ECONOMIC PROBLEM AND THE POTENTIAL GIZENGA THREAT AT HOME, MOBUTU HAS BEGUN TO TACK AND TRIM ON BOTH DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL COURSES.

2. AS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED, ON THE DOMESTIC FRONT MOBUTU'S SURPRISINGLY SHARP RESPONSE TO THE POTENTIAL GIZENGA THREAT (REF A), SPOTLIGHTED AN INCIDENT WHICH MIGHT OTHERWISE HAVE GONE UNNOTICED IN ZAIRE. THIS REACTION CONTRASTED STARKLY WITH HIS SENSITIVITY OVER THE MEREST MENTION OF THE STUDENT KIDNAPPING BY THE PRP LAST SUMMER. BUT THE GIZENGA STATEMENT, TAKEN IN THE CONTEXT OF DOMESTIC DISCONTENT (RUNAWAY INFLATION, GRUMBLING AT OVERINVOLVEMENT IN ANGOLA, WANING PARTY LOYALTY, SHORTAGES OF FOOD, MEDICINES, ETC.), AN ABIDING RESPECT FOR THE MISCHIEF-MAKING POTENTIAL OF THE EX-KATANGAN GENDARMES, AND THE PRECEIVED THREAT OF SOVIET/CUBAN-DIRECTED SUBVERSION, MAY WELL LOOM AS A SERIOUS MATTER IN MOBUTU'S MIND. HIS RECENT TRIPS TO KISANGANI, NORTHERN ZAIRE, AND THE REGIONS BORDERING ANGOLA ARE SEEN AS A CONCERTED EFFORT TO RALLY AN INCREASINGLY DISILLUSIONED PEOPLE. SUPPLEMENTING THE GUIDE'S OWN TRAVELS IS A CONTINUING, COUNTRY-WIDE SERIES OF MASS MEETINGS TO EXPLAIN ANGOLA POLICY AND OTHERWISE TO BEAT THE DRUM FOR MOBUTU, PLAYING TO LIMITED AND (IN KINSHASA AT LEAST) UNENTHUSIASTIC CROWDS, ORATORS HIT THE ENTIRE LITANY: ZAIRE, DEVOTED MEMBER OF OAU; ZAIRE, CHAMPION OF LIBERATION MOVEMENTS, HARBOREER OF REFUGEES; ZAIRE, VICTIM OF RUSSO-CUBAN AGGRESSION, TARGET OF SUBVERSION (GIGILANCE*); MOBUTU THE PEACEMAKER, BELOVED OF HIS PEOPLE (REMEMBER THE 60'S: MOBUTU OR CHAOS).

3. ON THE INTERNATIONAL FRONT, MOBUTU'S PRAGMATIC INSTINCT TO COVER ALL BETS IS INCREASINGLY EVIDENT IN HIS APPROACH TO THE ANGOLAN PROBLEM. HIS PROPAGANDA HAS CAREFULLY SPARED THE MPLA, RESERVING CONFIDENTIAL

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HEAVIEST FIRE FOR THE "SOCIO-IMPERIALISTS". FROM EARLIER STATEMENT THAT SENTIMENT FOR HOLDEN HAD TO BE TEMPERED WITH REALISM, ZAIRE HAS MOVED TO DECLARATION TANTAMOUNT TO "SOME OF OUR BEST FRIENDS ARE COMMUNISTS", THENCE TO REMINDER THAT NETO HAD ONCE FOUND REFUGE IN KINSHASA, THAT ZAIRE NEVER SOUGHT TO INTERFERE IN ANGOLA, THAT SHE IS NEUTRAL, WANTS ONLY TO SEE INSTALLED IN LUANDA A "GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNION". THEN, SOME SAY IN RESPONSE TO NETO'S FEBRUARY 2 STATEMENT OF CONDITIONS FOR NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS WITH ZAIRE,

MOUTU ON FEBRUARY 3 ANNOUNCED THAT MERCENARIES ENROUTE TO ANGOLA WILL NO LONGER BE ALLOWED TO TRANSIT ZAIRE.

4. ON A SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT TACK, MOBUTU HAS TAKEN THE INITIATIVE TO ELICIT EXPRESSIONS OF SYMPATHY AND SUPPORT FROM UGANDA, RWANDA, THE CAR, LIBERIA AND (LESS SUCCESSFULLY) FROM BURUNDI (REF C, D, E). WE HAVE ALSO HEARD THAT THE OFT-RUMORED MOBUTU-NGOUABI MEETING MAY BE ON FOR THIS WEEKEND IN KINSHASA, AND THERE ARE INCREASING REPORTS OF A PROBABLE 5-POWER SUMMIT, INCLUDING MOBUTU, IN LUSAKA.

5. IT APPEARS, IN SUM, THAT MOBUTU MAY BE GETTING THE STAGE FOR SOME SORT OF ACCOMMODATION WITH THE MPLA. PRECISE LINES OF SUCH A DEAL REMAIN VAGUE, BUT CERTAIN PLAUSIBLE ELEMENTS SUGGEST THEMSELVES: FOR EXAMPLE, A TIGHT REIN ON THE EX-KATANGAN GENDARMES AND EVENTUAL USE OF THE BENGUELA RAIL EXIT IN EXCHANGE FOR A COMMITMENT BY MOBUTU TO CEASE SUPPORT FOR FNLA IN NORTHERN ANGOLA. LATTER MIGHT BE ATTRACTIVE TO AL LUANDA GOVERNMENT EYEING POSSIBLE CUBAN DEPARTURE, THE PROSPECT OF GUERILLA RESISTANCE, AND ITS OWN EVENTUAL NEED FOR A RESPITE TO CONSOLIDATE.

6. MEANWHILE, THE IMF REFORM PROGRAM IS ON THE VERGE OF BEING INSTITUTED IN ZAIRE. IT WILL REQUIRE MAJOR SACRIFICES FROM BOTH THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PEOPLE. AS IN THE PAST WHEN SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IS ON THE HORIZON, MOBUTU RECENTLY RE-SHUFFLED HIS GOVERNMENT -- LEAVING THE IMPRESSION THAT THOSE WHO WERE REMOVED FROM OFFICE WERE RESPONSIBLE IN SOME WAY FOR PAST ERRORS AND CALLING YET AGAIN FOR DISCIPLINE, BELT-TIGHTENING AND LOYALTY. ON THE INTERNAL SIDE THEN, AS IN THE CASE OF ANGOLA, MOBUTU APPEARS TO BE MOVING TOWARD ACCOMMODATION TO DIFFICULT REALITIES.
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